



Sharing cultures. Enriching communities.

Key Ingredients at the Oracle Historical Society/Acadia Ranch Museum, Oracle

Key Ingredients: America by Food opened in Oracle at the **Acadia Ranch Museum** on Saturday, March 19, and ran through May 1, 2011. Deeded to the **Oracle Historical Society (OHS)** in 1978, the Acadia Ranch was originally a sheep ranch and later a resort for people with tuberculosis. A small community of less than 4,000 people, Oracle is located on the north side of the Santa Catalina Range in Pinal County. Since the turn of last century, settlers of African American, Apache, Basque, Chinese, English, French, German, Mexican, Scottish, and Tarahumara descent have all contributed to the region's culture and foodways.

OHS hoped to connect the communities of Oracle, Mammoth, and San Manuel to a sense of shared history by hosting Key Ingredients and celebrating their regional food traditions. They succeeded in doing so through a wonderful array of exhibits and programs that often included the sharing of regional foods.

In anticipation of the Smithsonian exhibition's arrival, OHS invited students to participate in *Food Is Art*, art-quilting workshops sponsored by the **Arizona Commission on the Arts** and hosted by **RLV OracleArt** and **4-H Desert Thunder** on March 5 and 6. Workshop leaders helped guide participants through interviewing family members and collecting recipes, stories, and photos, which were then integrated into wall hangings using traditional quilting techniques. The works were shown at the Key Ingredients Grand Opening, as well as during the Oracle Artists Studio Tour at the RLV OracleArt "Wilson Barn" on April 9 and 10.



A volunteer welcomes people on opening day with local program schedules and Key Ingredients Recipe Cards.



Young visitors enjoy the "cheeseheads" from the Smithsonian exhibition.

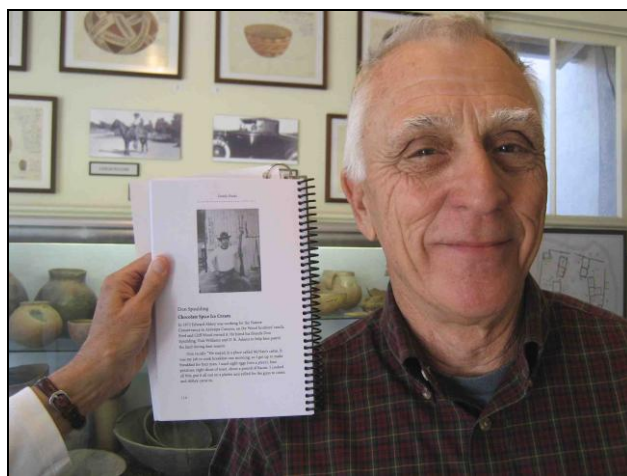
Over two hundred people attended Oracle's Grand Opening Reception & Tamale Festival, most of whom sampled **Sylvia Guerrero's** homemade tamales. OHS trained volunteer docents to lead tours of both the Smithsonian exhibition as well as their local companion exhibit, *Let's Have a Picnic! Outdoor Eating from Wikiups to Homesteads to Hotels*. Curated by writer **Catherine Ellis** and designed by OHS Board President **Chuck Sternberg**, the exhibit drew on archival photographs, newspaper articles, letters, recipes, hotel menus, oral histories, and artifacts to tell the story of the region's outdoor eating traditions. Hohokam cooking pots from the museum's collections were on display for the first time.

"Food played a central role in the pioneer life of the tri-community," said Ellis, "from the Apache, Mexican, and Anglo homesteaders along Aravaipa Creek and the San Pedro River, to the Mexican-Anglo ranchers and cowboys of the Catalina foothills, to the Chinese chefs and African American proprietors of Oracle's health resort hotel." In addition to their exhibit, OHS and the Acadia Ranch Museum developed and published a local cookbook with heirloom recipes and histories from tri-community families entitled *Family Feasts: Recipes & Stories from the Galiuros to the Catalinas and Beyond*.

Co-authors **Emily Düwel** (Key Ingredients Project Director) and **Susan Woodruff** (Key Ingredients Project Oral Historian) collected recipes and family stories from newcomers and long-time residents alike, including pioneer mixed-heritage families. Photo-journalist and OHS Board Member **John Hernandez** also researched *The San Manuel Miner* archives, and Woodruff also researched old cookbooks. Having received training in oral history collection from Key Ingredients Project Scholar Mary Melcher, Woodruff hopes to continue collecting interviews for the museum's archives.



Oracle resident Dianna Newell and volunteer docent Sue Ann Carrol with the new cookbook.



Don Spaulding poses with his recipe and boyhood photo from the cookbook.

Area students were also invited to contribute to *Family Feasts* using the "Collecting Family Recipes And Stories" *Teachers & Students Guide* produced by OHS. The guide includes an introduction to doing oral history: "Every family has an important story to tell about the ways in which food was once gathered, kept, made and eaten. Let's find out about your own family's amazing story about

food!"; guidelines for doing interviews; and sample interview questions: "Did you eat different foods at different times of the year or at holidays? Do you have any special memories about food from your childhood? When you became a parent, what changed about your own cooking from that of your childhood home?" Educators from **First Avenue Elementary, Mountain View, and Sierra Oaks Schools** compiled and submitted the student interviews for the cookbook.

Published just in time for the Grand Opening, *Family Feasts* is a major accomplishment for OHS and Arizona's Key Ingredients project as a whole. Two excerpts follow, the first from the Preface: "Stories and food go together...at family gatherings, where favorite dishes are served...they reinforce our family bonds and serve as bridges between young and old." For her "Bread" recipe, resident **Jane Woodruff** interviewed her mother, who recalled, "me, arriving many afternoons from a frosty walk from school, opening the door, inhaling deeply and, while hanging on the doorjamb, breathing a thankful chant, 'You made bread today!'" (p. 4).

OHS offered a diverse schedule of public programs that included AHC Road Scholar presentations. On March 20, Key Ingredients State Coordinator **Ann-Mary Lutzick** gave her Harvey House talk "Don't Cut the Ham Too Thin, Boys" at the San Manuel Historical Society. Key Ingredients Project Scholar **Mary Melcher** presented "Arizona Foods during the Depression and World War" at the **Mammoth Public Library** on April 2.

On March 26 and 27, ethnobotanist **Martha Ames Burgess**, former education director at **Native Seeds/SEARCH**, led the *Wild Foods & Herbs Walking Tour and Cooking Demo* on the Oracle portion of the Arizona Trail. On April 30, she presented *Cholla Bud Harvest*, hosted by the Mammoth Public Library and **Mammoth Historical Society**. A tradition of the **Tohono O'odham** people for generations, the incredibly healthy buckhorn cholla cactus flower buds are hand-picked, cleaned of thorns, and dried for year-round cooking.



An antique stove at the Acadia Ranch Museum, part of the "Historic Kitchens and Cooks of Oracle" tour.



San Manuel resident Sylvia Guerrero sells her homemade tamales at the Oracle Grand Opening.

On April 3, **Sharon Holnback** led the hands-on workshop, *How to Build a Backyard Clay Oven*, at the historic **Triangle L Ranch**. Also known as *horno* in Spanish, these ovens date back ten thousand years to the Middle East and are considered the most durable and efficient ovens possible. Participants mixed wet sand and clay from a nearby wash with their bare feet, then built a full-sized, dome-shaped oven from the “mud.” They left the workshop knowing how to build and use their own backyard clay ovens.

On April 23, **Catherine Ellis**, regional history writer and author of *Oracle and the San Pedro River*, led the *Historic Ranch Kitchens and Cooks Tour*. Participants explored the kitchens of Oracle’s turn-of-the-century ranches and discovered the hidden cooking history and ingenuity of the Southwest frontier. The tour began at the former cattle/dude ranch and current artist community **Rancho Linda Vista**; continued on to the **Steward House** and **Cherry Valley** and Triangle L Ranches; and finished at Acadia Ranch, where participants enjoyed tea and scones on the museum’s wraparound porch. The museum was also the site of a Key Ingredients Closing Reception on May 1 that featured homemade green chile.

OHS assembled a remarkable coalition of volunteers (over fifty), programming partners, and financial sponsors for their stop on the statewide tour. Thanks to extensive promotional efforts by John Hernandez, **Val Bembeneck**, and **Mark Lewis**, visitors came from the tri-communities as well as Aravaipa, Winkleman, Hayden, Saddlebrooke, Catalina, Oro Valley, Marana, Tucson, Phoenix, and beyond. In addition to the 1,400 visitors to the Smithsonian exhibition, OHS and their project partners hosted over 794 visitors at their local exhibits and programs, for a total Key Ingredients visitation of 2,194 people.

Project Director **Emily Düwel** writes, “As a result of Key Ingredients, the Society and its Museum today are profoundly transformed institutions, with newfound capacities and a much broader and diverse visitorship. Beyond that, the exhibition and its programs helped to foster greater community ties and a deeper awareness of the ways in which everyone’s different ethnic and cultural backgrounds have shaped the region.”